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2016 LAVENDER COMMUNITY AWARDS

YEAR END ISSUE

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DECEMBER 8-21, 2016

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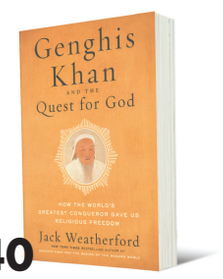
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ON THE COVER

The end of the year is a time for celebrating the good. Pictured here as part of the best of the arts of 2016: Emily Dussault and Leslie Vincent in *June*. Photo by Carl Atiya Swanson



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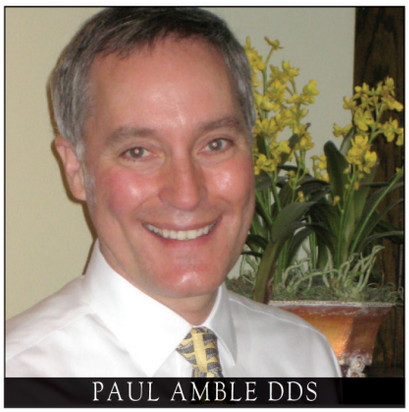


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FROM THE EDITOR | BY ANDY LIEN

Recognizing the Good

2016. I don't think I have ever read as much as I did this year. Articles, thoughts, worries, warnings, history, self-help, obituaries, tributes, and as much whimsy as I could throw in for balance. I've even kept a nice instructional article from the *Star Tribune* detailing how to make a 2016 dumpster fire ornament, which I will likely add to my tree this year. Art as therapy. I'll take it. But what I find to be more important than soaking in words until my fingers get pruney is people — relating in real life, being with them in body, hearing their thoughts, showing up as a form of solidarity. A friend threw a potluck a few weekends ago, just to get people together to remind us that we have each other and that is such a good thing. We are a good thing.

There is such goodness in people. I tell you, if you ever want an upper, run a contest asking people to submit others for recognition with the stipulation that they have to give reasons why a person deserves an award. Honestly, I say this is my favorite issue of the year because I love giving people recognition; but, perhaps more than that, it's because I get to learn why *others* think someone should be recognized. This year, the Lavender Community Awards recognize eight people and organizations. We talk about who they are and what they do and where they involve themselves and for whom. That's what so much of this is about: who these people help and why. And what others see in the work they do.

From the submissions, I read about many other awards that some of these people have received as well as all of the different roles they play for different organizations. I learned about particular circumstances when they stepped in to help and stand up for others. Words like "tireless" came up multiple times as did "help," "advocate," "defense," and "fight." Some of the winners might be fairly new to the scene or have started newer programs or groups to address the continuing needs of this community, others have been fighting the fight for years and years. There are artists and organizers and leaders and lawyers and volunteers and friendly faces. What it all underscores is that there is so much that has been done in and for this community, and there is still so much more left to do. And what I wish for so many of the leaders and volunteers in this community is some sort of fuel of goodwill for their tirelessness. Because helping, advocating, defending, and fighting is hard work, as is pulling people together to form new alliances and support groups and work groups and audiences for the art that helps best express the challenges and triumphs of our days. I give a heartfelt thank you to both the recipients of the 2016 Lavender Community Awards as well as the people who nominated them. Good begets good.

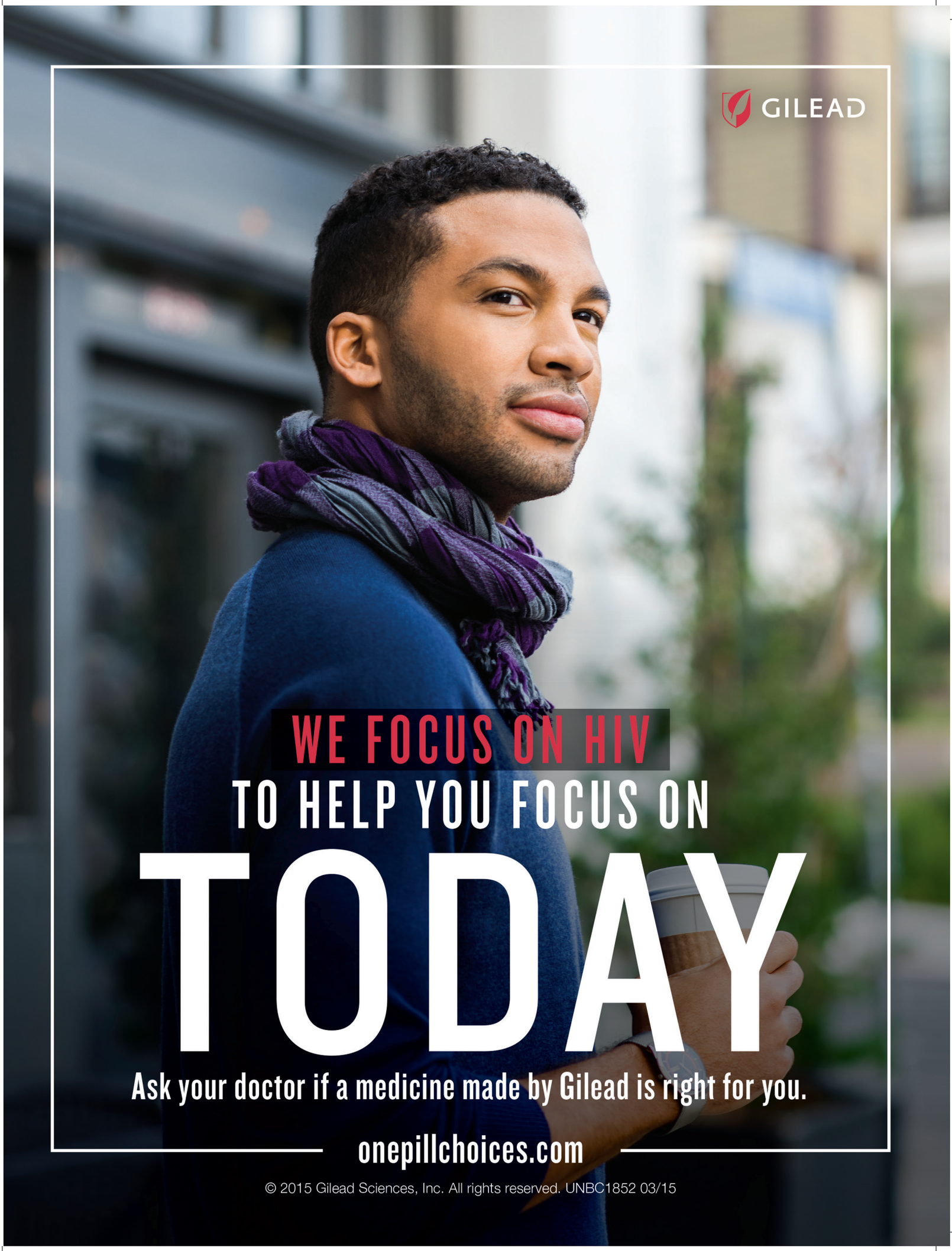
Also of tremendous worth is the Arts Best of 2016 feature by John Townsend. John, through his Arts Spotlight and countless online reviews throughout the year, provides great fodder for understanding his choices and awards for the stars of our performing arts community in 2016. It is through the arts that we expand how we think and feel about our world, and I am ever so grateful to the people who give us these gifts...show after show, script after script, note after note, step after step.

I will take from 2016 the beauty of people, the hearts of the tireless, and the comfort we can find in each other. Have very happy holidays and I'll see you in 2017.

With you and with love and thanks,

Andy ■




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A WORD IN EDGEWISE | BY E.B. BOATNER

Only Things Certain Are Death and Taxes

Today, with a good lawyer, taxes have become moot, leaving, "the only thing certain is death," a topic movingly discussed in Atul Gawande's highly readable book, *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*. Not exactly a holiday topic, perhaps, but one needed to be considered by family members of all ages.

Dr. Gawande knows whereof he writes. A surgeon at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the son of two doctors, it was not until well into his own career that he realized how medicine has failed its clientele, and how, now, it can make reparations.

The purpose of his medical schooling concentrated on "how to save lives, not how to tend to their demise." Here, through poignant examples (including the decline of his own, vigorous father), Gawande began to think about his patients and the inevitable end-game slide and how to be as supportive as possible during their inevitable end-game descent. Aiming for patients to be in control of their time, he wants to guide them, "insofar as possible, to keep shaping the story of their life in the world."

To discover a given story, says Gawande, tackle the "hard conversations." Don't tell, don't ask, take time to discuss and discover:

What are your biggest fears and concerns?

What goals are most important to you?

What trade-offs are you willing to make to gain them?

What trade-offs are you not willing to make?

Gawande reported that goals can be as simple as "watching football on television and eating chocolate ice cream," but this knowledge can guide the choice of treatment offering the best outcome for that goal. These conversations will assist the living as well, when one faces an anguishing choice and realizes the answer has already been made.

Death will come to all, and Gawande urges seeking not a good death, but a good life to the end. "Hope is not a plan," he reminds the reader, and urges us all to consider, "what do you want now?" To this end, he has created a method to help loved ones, and, for the not-faint-at-heart, to begin to question ourselves about what will be the most autonomous way to bow out when it is finally time to go. ■





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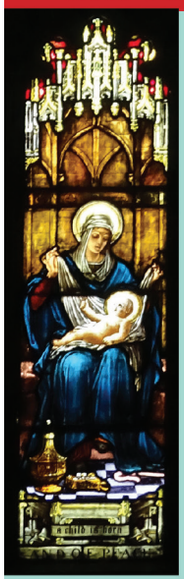
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11:15 a.m. Children's Christmas Pageant

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Christmas Eve, December 24
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- **Child-friendly Christmas Service** - 4:00 p.m.*
- **Candlelight Services** - 7:30* and 10:00 p.m.
  David A. Van Dyke, preaching
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2016 YEAR IN REVIEW

PERFORMING ARTS

By John Townsend



Disgraced. Photo by Dan Norman

★ BEST PRODUCTIONS

1. *Camelot*, Chanhassen Dinner Theatres
2. *The Normal Heart*, New Epic Theater
3. *Disgraced*, Guthrie Theater
4. *June,* Savage Umbrella
5. *South Pacific,* Guthrie Theater
6. *Buried Child*, Red Bird Theatre
7. *Trouble in Mind*, Guthrie Theater
8. *Le Switch*, Jungle Theater
9. *Sons of the Prophet*, Park Square Theatre
10. (3-way Tie)

Antigone, Theatre Coup d'Etat
Charm, Mixed Blood Theatre
The Oldest Boy, Jungle Theatre



Trouble in Mind. Photo by Keri Picket

★ EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT IN THEATER

The Dutchman and *Jitney*, Penumbra Theatre

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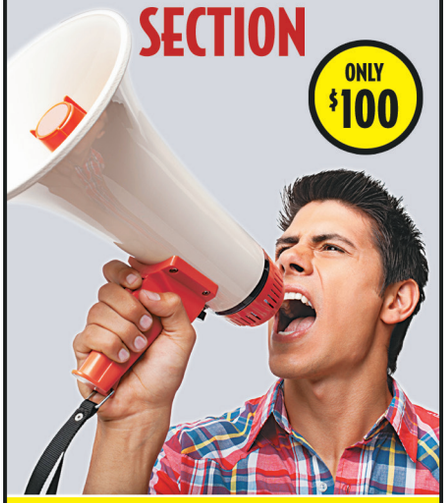
★ THEATER ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Sasha Andreev, Actor: *Sons of the Prophet*, Park Square Theatre; *Buyer and Cellar*, Hennepin

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The Dutchman. Photo by Allen Weeks

Theatre Trust; *Ragtime*, Theater Latté Da

★ BEST DIRECTOR (TIE)
Lou Bellamy, *The Dutchman* and *Jitney*, Penumbra Theatre
Michael Brindisi, *Camelot*, Chanhassen Dinner Theatres

★ BEST DRAMATIC ACTRESS
Margo Moorer, *Trouble in Mind*, Guthrie Theater

★ BEST COMEDIC ACTRESS
Caroline Kaiser, *The How and the Why*, Theatre Unbound/Hennepin Theatre Trust

★ BEST MUSICAL ACTRESS
Annie Enneking, *Lullaby*, Theater Latté Da

★ BEST DRAMATIC ACTOR
Bhavesh Patel, *Disgraced*, Guthrie Theater

★ BEST COMEDIC ACTOR
Joseph Papke, *Volpone*, Classical Actors Ensemble

★ BEST MUSICAL ACTOR (TIE)
Matt Tatone, *Leap of Faith*, Minneapolis Musical Theatre/Hennepin Theatre Trust



Sons of the Prophet. Photo by Petronella J Ytsma



Lullaby. Photo by George Byron Griffiths

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Keith Rice, *Camelot*, Chanhassen Dinner Theatres



Camelot. Photo by Heidi Bohnenkamp, 2016

★ BEST SUPPORTING DRAMATIC ACTRESS
Kaylyn Forkey, *The Glass Menagerie*, Theatre Coup d'Etat

★ BEST SUPPORTING COMEDIC ACTRESS
Suzanne Warmanen, *Sense and Sensibility*, Guthrie Theater

★ BEST SUPPORTING MUSICAL ACTRESS
Christine Toy Johnson, *South Pacific*, Guthrie Theater

★ BEST SUPPORTING DRAMATIC ACTOR
Adam Qualls, *The Normal Heart and Coriolanus*, New Epic Theater



The Two Gentlemen of Verona. Photo by Jenny Graham



I'll Eat You Last: A Chat with Sue Mengers. Photo by Ryan Coit

★ BEST SUPPORTING COMEDIC ACTOR
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★ BEST SUPPORTING MUSICAL ACTOR
Brandon A. Jackson, *Leap of Faith*, Minneapolis Musical Theatre

★ BEST SOLO PERFORMANCE
Julie Dafydd, *I'll Eat You Last: A Chat with Sue Mengers*, Candid Theatre at LUSH

★ SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN CROSSGENDER PERFORMANCE
Christiana Clark, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Jungle Theater

★ SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN OPERATIC PERFORMANCE
Brian Mulligan, *The Shining*, Minnesota Opera

★ MOST ELECTRIFYING STAGE CHEMISTRY (TIE)
Nathan Barlow and Kate Guentzel, *The Dutchman*, Penumbra Theatre
Torsten Johnson and Michael Wieser, *Coriolanus*, New Epic Theater

★ BEST CHOREOGRAPHY
Michael Matthew Ferrell, *The Drowsy Chaperone,* Artistry

★ BEST MUSIC DIRECTION
Tim Weil, *South Pacific*, Guthrie Theater

★ BEST LIGHTING
Mary Shabatura, *Ragtime*, Theater Latté Da

★ BEST SET DESIGN
Vicki Smith, *Jitney*, Penumbra Theatre

★ BEST COSTUME DESIGN
Kathy Kohl, *The Good Person of Setzuan*, Frank Theatre

★ BEST SOUND DESIGN
Sarah Dewhirst and Steve Modena, *Antigone*, Theatre Coup d'Etat

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— Michelle Barber, *Gypsy*, Theater Latté Da/Hennepin Theatre Trust



Buried. Photo by Dan Norman



The Oldest Boy. Photo by Dan Norman



Jitney. Photo by Allen Weeks



Sing Me Naked. Photo by Pete Beaman



South Pacific. Photo by T. Charles Erickson

— Christina Baldwin and Masanari Kawahara, *The Oldest Boy*, Jungle Theater
— Neal Beckman, *Julius Caesar*, Classical Actors Ensemble
— Emily Grodzick, *The Good Person of Setzuan*, Frank Theatre
— Jolly Abraham and John Catron, *Sense and Sensibility*, Guthrie Theater
— James Craven and Abdul Salaam El Razaac, *Jitney*, Penumbra Theatre
— Erin Mackey and Edward Staudenmayer, *South Pacific*, Guthrie Theater
— Steve Hendrickson, *Finding Fish*, Illusion Theater, *South Pacific* and *Harvey*, Guthrie Theater
— Joel de la Fuente, *Hold These Truths*, Guthrie Theater
— Bradley Greenwald, Jill Iverson, and Philip C. Matthews, *The Baker's Wife*, Artistry
— Ansa Akyea and Darius Dotch, *Bars and Measures*, Jungle Theater
— Helen Anker and David Anthony Brinkley, *Camelot*, Chanhassen Dinner Theatres ■



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ARTS & CULTURE | BY JOHN TOWNSEND



Photo by Joan Marcus

DTWOF's Alison Bechdel's Broadway Smash Hits Minneapolis!

If you were aware of queer issues between 1983 to 2008, you probably enjoyed Alison Bechdel's breakthrough comic strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For (DTWOF)*. Little did you know, however, that the great lesbian cartoonist would generate one of the great New York musicals of the 2010s. Her bestselling 2006 graphic memoir, *Fun Home*, was named number one book of the year by *Time* magazine and went on to begin development for the stage at New York's Public Theater Lab in 2012. In 2015 it went on to win five Tony Awards including Best Musical.

Bechdel shares, "*Fun Home* was a story that simmered in my head for 20 years. It is about growing up with my closeted gay father (Bruce Bechdel) who killed himself when I was in college, a few months after I told my parents that I was a lesbian. It's a very complicated, very personal, very particular story; and a story that I wasn't sure I would ever be able to tell because of the family secrets it revealed. But over the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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Photos by Joan Marcus

years, as I got closer to being middle-aged, I felt an increasingly insistent need to tell it, a sense that it was, in fact, obligatory to tell it. Partly to honor the full complexity of who my father was, instead of letting an incomplete official record stand."

She adds, "but also I felt like I had to tell this story because it was such a vivid, demonstrative example of the impact of homophobia in real life, on an actual family."

The book and lyrics for the musical were written by Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori composed the music. Both won Tonys for the production, making them the first female duo to ever be awarded the Best Score Tony Award. Bechdel says, "They seemed to be able to see the emotions of the story more clearly than I could, it was like they found the acupuncture points of the story and inserted needles in the exact right spots."

Fun Home is an expansion of queer consciousness in New York theater that took a leap a bit over two decades ago with *Angels in America*. Since then, numerous queer-themed shows have blossomed such as *Rent*, *Take Me Out, I Am My Own Wife,* and *Kinky Boots*, just to name a few. *Fun Home* is a new breakthrough among that line of New York theatrical gems. Its national tour in the Twin Cities has been eagerly awaited.

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AT LARGE | BY JOHN MARK

10 Things I Learned in 2016

Reflecting on a year of love, pain, and adventure, here are some of my fresher dispositions on life. Take them as a grain of salt. I'm still growing.

10. Apologies only count if they're real.

You can only apologize for something if it's truly an accident or a regret. This year brought much attention to the authenticity of an "I'm sorry." Much like the words "love" or "hate," a real apology should be just that: real. I find myself asking apologetic friends, "Are you really sorry, or is your apology a distraction from a decision made in the first degree?"

9. Sleep is important.

It's elementary, but it's real. Like many of you, I heard from my teachers, my mom, the internet, and now I can say it out loud: getting sleep is a must. As a natural night owl, sleep has never been a priority, until now. Earlier this year, my health suffered greatly as a result of too much work and not enough sleep. As someone who lives for the hustle, it took a big nudge from the physical being to put my mind in check.

8. Think about what you want to leave behind.

This year, I traveled to San Diego to pack up my deceased uncle's apartment and help my mother deal with his affairs. It was a bittersweet experience, but above all it was impactful to go through the sum of a man's material possession. The whole experience left me wanting to be more conscious of what I leave behind both in legacy and in stock.

7. Snapchat is Satan.

Literally. You can make your face look like that of Satan's. But figuratively as well; Snapchat perpetuates the narcissistic culture we live in; it encourages us to promote ourselves doing meaningless shit to an audience. Not only did you waste your time recording "the perfect video," but you also wasted 10 seconds of every extremely bored person in your contacts.

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2016 LAVENDER / COMMUNITY AWARDS

Produced by Andy Lien
Written by Shane Lueck

The recipients of the Lavender Community Awards were nominated and voted for online in the month of November. Winners demonstrate clear dedication and leadership by being either out or an ally and working for the advancement of the community that is comprised of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and allied people. Without further ado, we are proud to present the recipients of the 2016 Lavender Community Awards.

RYAN BERG



Organizational Involvement

AVENUES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH, RECLAIM!, THE LINK, POINT SOURCE YOUTH, NATION BOOKS

"So much of queer history is unknown because our narratives have been silenced in mainstream culture because they rewrite stories and place themselves at the center," says Ryan Berg, author of *No House to Call My Home*, which chronicles his time working with LGBTQ youth in foster care and experiencing homelessness. As program manager of the ConneQT Host Home Program through Avenues for Homeless Youth, Berg works in partnership with other organizations to provide preventative services and interventions for LGBTQ-identified youth experiencing housing instability. "Many LGBTQ youth report discrimination, violence, or rejection when attempting to utilize supports and services," he says. "Much more needs to be done to ensure youth have access to affirming, inclusive spaces. I want LGBTQ youth to feel safe telling their own stories; to be the custodians of their own narratives." Berg's youth work is about taking actionable steps to evoke change in the community while his writing illustrates how the power of stories can become transformational, building empathy and understanding for those who have historically been marginalized. Berg is currently working on a new book regarding the ties between bullying, trauma, mental health, and suicide in LGBTQ youth.

Photo by Marc Charbonneau

ANDREW BERTKE



Organizational Involvement

ATONS OF MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA LEATHER PRIDE, CAPITAL CITY PRIDE, GAYLAXICON, MR. MINNEAPOLIS EAGLE, MR. TWIN CITIES LEATHER, MINNESOTA LEATHER PRIDE WEEKEND, IOWA LEATHER WEEKEND, AND INTERNATIONAL MR. LEATHER

Graphic designer and photographer Andrew Bertke volunteers in the GLBT and allied leather, kink, and science fiction communities. Bertke has served on committees, done design work, and organized events for various organizations, but is perhaps best known for his work with event photography at local, regional, and international leather events and contests. "As a young queer leather geek, I struggled to find a place that I felt comfortable," he shares. "When I finally found my fellow GLBTA science fiction fans and the local leather community, I found ways to contribute and nurture these groups to help build a place for future young queer leather geeks." Bertke cares about the history of the community and helps capture it through his photography, while also helping make the community visible and a safe place for leather and kink people. He adds, "I hope I can offer the next generation (young and old) every opportunity to develop their space and traditions while helping them remember and appreciate the joy and pain that went into the community before they arrived."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

Photo by Andrew Bertke

HECTOR CHAVARRIA



Photo by Hector Chavarria

Organizational Involvement

GADFLY THEATER, PATRICK'S CABARET, 20% THEATRE COMPANY, OUTSPOKEN, GUTHRIE THEATER, MIXED BLOOD THEATER

Perhaps better known as The Big Gay Mexican, Hector Chavarria is a wearer of many hats. With a day time job working in the box office at the Guthrie Theater, he also works as an actor, singer, playwright, and performance artist. "I created Big Gay Mexican about three years ago," he shares. "I created this persona because I wanted to find an artistic way to battle with stereotypes in the arts and social media. Fat-shaming and racism within our community are a huge problem that I encounter on a daily basis, along with homophobia outside the community and within my family." Chavarria writes about his experiences as a big, gay, Mexican American man to shed light on social issues that are not discussed, providing a voice and a presence that historically has not been presented positively in the world. With so much hatred encouraged in today's social media, Chavarria's goal is to inspire and promote self-love. He adds, "I want to send a message to anyone who has been told they were different or was told they needed to change that we must all have courage and be kind to make this world a better place. In order to love ourselves we must be free to be ourselves."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

6. Everything in moderation, including moderation.

I'm all for healthy lifestyles, but every once and a while, I need to let loose. It does something for my soul to just completely let go for one night. In fact, I've actually started to *schedule* these party nights on my calendar, once a month. Mandatory fun. Yikes. Am I really that boring? See, this is why I need to party more.

5. You need to do what you love.

When my peers started becoming employed, I was envious of those with the big, corporate jobs (well, really just the money). But now, five years later, those same people have told me that they wish they were in my spot because I've been doing what I want to do. If you continue working a job you don't love just for the money, then you're only prolonging your existence *so you can continue to do things you don't want to do.*

4. The world is going to end.

I can feel it; the end times are upon us. Too many impossible things happened in 2016 for the apocalypse to not be right around the corner. There is still some time left, though, so do not fret. No but seriously, you're all going to die.

3. Get the Alaska roll at Raku Sushi.

Salmon, avocado, cucumber, and tobiko. So simple, so healthy, so tasty. I had one of the best dates I've ever had there and I ordered the Alaska roll which made me look like I knew what I was doing. You know what they say: if you're good in the eats, you're good in the sheets.

2. Make your mental breaks physical.

I used to count a break as sitting and mindlessly scrolling on Facebook (time I wish I could desperately get back). Now when I take breaks I get up and walk around the block, leaving my phone behind. I do this and try to clear my mind, seeing where it goes when it's free. It's a nice way to help prioritize and it helps me actually feel refreshed (which is the point of break).

1. Let that shit go.

Earlier in the year, someone broke into my car and stole my sunglasses, the only thing I owned that could be labeled "expensive." It took me a few weeks, but I had to learn to let it go because I was not going to get them back; it was out of my control. But what I could control is whether or not I was going to waste time hating that person. My sunglasses? Maybe. My time? Eff you! So, if something bad happens to you out of your control, let it be water off the duck's back and just keep moving. ■







Photo by Sophia Hantzes

GAY FOR GOOD TWIN CITIES

Gay for Good's mission is to mobilize and energize the LGBTQA community to interact with the greater state of Minnesota by volunteering with various social, environmental, and other service projects. Simply put, their greatest goal is to do good and be good. Co-founders Beth Mejia and Creg Schumann define the work the organization does as creating opportunities to transform the Minnesota community. They say that by creating a series of opportunities for both LGBTQ and allied people to come together in the service of the community, true transformation is possible. "When we are able to create highly mobile and engaged groups of volunteers who are deeply invested in addressing the pressing issues of our time, only then can we truly create a path to a better society," they say. "Through each project, through the work of our incredible volunteers, we continue to grow and we envision a world where volunteering to make the world a better place becomes not something to be celebrated but rather is simply a part of being and doing good. In the future, we see completing volunteer projects beyond the Twin Cities in Greater Minnesota and are looking for ways to partner with organizations in a variety of locations that need us."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

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GENDER JUSTICE

Staff (left to right, back row): Lisa Stratton, Co-Founder and Senior Counsel; Megan Peterson, Executive Director; Kristin Johnson, Litigation Assistant/Intake and Communications Coordinator; (left to right, front row) Christy Hall, Staff Attorney; Jill Gaulding, Co-Founder and Senior Counsel; Gaonou Vang, New Sector Alliance Fellow. Photo by Hubert Bonnet

Gender Justice is a nonprofit legal and policy advocacy organization devoted to addressing the causes and consequences of gender inequality. Gender Justice fights any discrimination based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity through three program areas: litigation, policy advocacy, and education. Gender Justice uses existing laws relating to gender discrimination as a basis for battles for LGBTQ rights. Jill Gaulding, co-founder and senior counsel says, "We're helping to guarantee that LGBTQ rights are here to stay. When you realize that LGBTQ rights arise out of long-standing existing laws that protect against discrimination based on sex, we make it harder for regressive shifts in who has political power to roll back the progress we've made. It also means that LGBTQ people can have faster access to justice than if we had to go out and establish new rights." Gender Justice takes cases that help people locally but often go on to have a national impact. When progress is made here, other courts and cases refer to them to make progress elsewhere. The people at Gender Justice believe that a world without restrictive gender stereotypes is better for everyone, not just LGBTQ people. "We think it's about doing the right thing for individuals and our entire society, and that breaking down gender barriers, stereotypes, and expectations would improve all of our lives," says executive director Megan Peterson. "It's an honor to get to work every day for people's rights. Sometimes we feel we're fighting uphill battles, but at the end of the day, there's nothing else we'd rather be doing. We're optimistic about the progress we've made and will continue to make."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

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GRANT MEIDAL



Organizational Involvement

FATHERS GROUP MN, BOYS & BREWS, HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN, TWIN CITIES GAY MEN'S CHORUS

Though Grant Meidal's day job is with Whole Foods Market corporate, he spends his time building community from the inside out, gathering GLBT folk around common interests and loves. He facilitated Fathers Group MN for three years, a support group for men who married women and had kids before addressing their sexuality and beginning the path to authenticity. He also created Boys & Brews, a meet up for GBTQ and allied men. "I came out of the closet after a 29-year marriage and four kids," he says. "It took courage I didn't know I had, and support from others who understood. My story is a lot like others', so I get involved to help make the journey more joyful. It's a very hard road with no guarantees. I'm there because we need each other." He credits the incredible support found here in the Twin Cities and the fathers group (which has been around for 30 years) for helping him grow.

Photo by Sophia Hantzes

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CHUCK PETERSON



Organizational Involvement

CLARE HOUSING, RED RIBBON RIDE, HIV HOUSING COALITION, COALITION FOR CHOICE IN HOUSING, NATIONAL AIDS HOUSING COALITION, CANTUS

Currently serving as executive director of Clare Housing, Chuck Peterson has a 25-year history with HIV/AIDS service organizations. Peterson works with a team of advocates and caring professions who provide support and care to nearly 200 people living with HIV each year. "Much of my work focuses on advocating for equitable access to housing and health care for those in our community who are low-income and experiencing homelessness," he says. Clare Housing believes that housing and health care are human rights and that no one should be denied housing or health care based on income, sexual orientation, criminal background, or other discriminatory characteristics. "My hope is our collective work will reduce the stigma many still experience today and all people living with HIV in Minnesota will have a place to call home and access to health care and critical supports," Peterson adds. "I lost my best friend to AIDS-related complications many years ago. It impacted me deeply, and started me down this path. There are many in our community who have grown up after the worst of the AIDS crisis abated. For many of them, HIV/AIDS is a problem that's been solved. They couldn't be more wrong. HIV/AIDS is not over. Medical treatments are effective, but they are not accessible to all. Stigma still prevents many from getting diagnosed in the first place. Three decades ago we started this work, we fought hard for the rights of people living with HIV. I do this work to continue that fight."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

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CHERYL REEVE

Fighting for gender equality has become head coach Cheryl Reeve's calling, in addition to the Lynx's quest for a WNBA title repeat. Whether on social media, in private conversations or at large speaking engagements, Reeve passionately advocates for greater media coverage of women's sports, better pay in the workplace and more willingness from "decision-makers" to ignore traditional stereotypes. She uses her platform to highlight and promote acceptance and inclusion. Both on the court and in the stands, Reeve and her team have worked hard to show appreciation for their LGBT fans. Long before the league announced a marketing plan directed toward the LGBT community, Reeve and the Lynx have been working with LGBT advocacy groups for years and have hosted their own Pride games. The team also has a booth at the Twin Cities Gay Pride Festival, where it hands out information and sells merchandise. In a statement about the league's efforts to reach out to the LGBT community, Reeve said, "Sports are a microcosm of society. And the WNBA is so much more than basketball. I applaud and stand with the WNBA and CoverGirl [a co-sponsor of the initiative] in this very important platform promoting acceptance and inclusion." With her commitment to the LGBTA community as well as her team, it's no wonder Reeve was named the 2016 WNBA Coach of the Year for a second time, having previously done so in 2011.

Photo by Sophia Hantzes

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BOOKS | BY E.B. BOATNER

Genghis Khan and the Quest for God

How the World's Greatest Conqueror Gave Us Religious Freedom

Genghis Khan was a self-made man. In fact, for the first seven chapters of Weatherford's fascinating biography, he was not the Great Khan, but simply Temujin, born in 1162 to the warrior Yesugei and his stolen wife, Hoelun.

"Much of what we know about Genghis Khan's early life," explains Weatherford, "comes from a document known as *The Secret History of the Mongols*, composed two years after his death." Written in code and hidden away, it was found in the 19th century and decoded only in the 20th.

After Yesugei was murdered, the history runs, his two wives and their children were not allowed to worship the ancestors, and were driven out onto the steppe to die. But they survived, and Temujin stepped onto his warrior path, bringing the people of the steppe under his rule.

In 1206, he took a new name ("Chinggas," or "Genghis") for himself and "Mongol," for his nation and people, never explaining the reason for or meaning of this word. Secrets, he realized, are part of the power of knowledge. As lord of millions who practiced myriad religions, Genghis Khan became fascinated by the power that religion held, and determined to enlist that power on behalf of his empire.

Rather than attempting to unite the various religions, he sought specifically to keep diversity. By placing men of different religions and ethnicities in various groups, he could utilize their unique skills while preventing any one religion from gaining ascendancy and therefore maintain tighter control. Weatherford stresses that Genghis Khan was by no means offering his people *political* freedom, "but offering instead protection, stability, and total religious freedom" uniquely for the individual.

As presented by Weatherford, Genghis Khan was not so much questing for a personal god, which he had earlier found in the pure winds and sacred waters, shining light and snows of the mountains, but "had clear motivations for his religious policies." At his death in August 1228, he was returned to his mountain, Burkhan Khaldun. There was no tomb or mausoleum, no new religion; Genghis Khan died a Mongol.

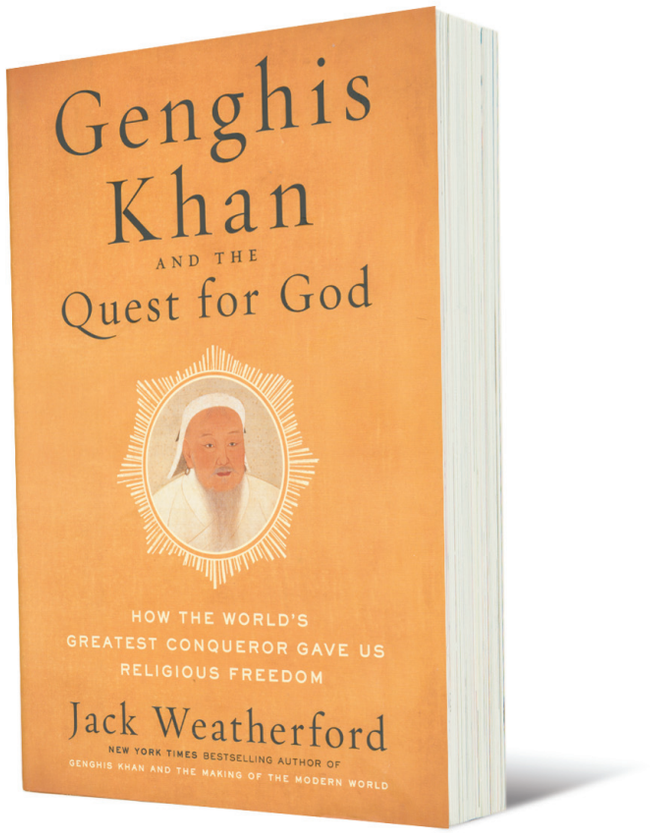
Weatherford found his inspiration for this book while writing his *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* (2004) on Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–89). Gibbon, who himself had been variously Catholic, Protestant, and Deist, had found that Americans, particularly Thomas Jefferson, looked to offer citizens a total religious freedom and a complete separation of church and state. After much study, Gibbon had also concluded that in the matter of handling god and politics, one leader had stood above all others: Genghis Khan.

Weatherford embarked on this volume in an effort to link Jefferson and Genghis Khan, and he came *this* close. Jefferson had read and reread, both in the original French and English, François Pétis de la Croix's *The History of Genghizcan the Great, First Emperor of the Ancient Mongols and Tartars* (1710), and had given multiple copies as gifts. In this volume he found the text of the Mongolian Law of Religious Freedom, from which he gleaned, reports Weatherford, that "religious freedom was an individual right, not a prerogative of the church."

But did Genghis Khan "give" us religious freedom? The author concedes that Jefferson had embraced the idea before reading de la Croix's biography, but that what he found in Genghis Khan's words was a specific way to translate the desire for religious freedom into law.

Jefferson, like Genghis Khan, was a quester; he studied religions, owned a Quran, and ruthlessly pruned his Bible down to what he believed was the true philosophy of Jesus. The two might well be in concord across the centuries. The Great Khan never converted to any of the many existing religions, pointing out that none of them had saved their peoples' countries from him, and asking, "Why should I descend from lofty trees to enter a dark valley?" Some 500 years later Thomas Jefferson wrote, "I am of a sect by myself as far as I know."

Weatherford has written an eminently readable and exhaustively researched biography illuminating unknown aspects of Genghis Khan while raising questions about power and religion with which we still struggle today. ■



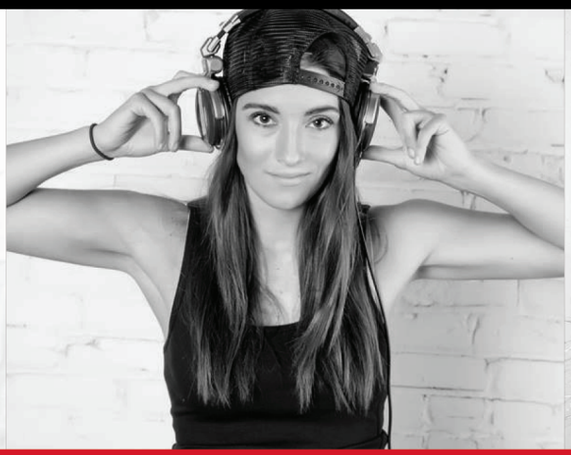


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RIDE REVIEW | BY RANDY STERN | PHOTOS BY RANDY STERN

The Best of 2016



Audi TT

This year, I was able to bring a lot of great vehicles for you to read about here in *Lavender* magazine. It was a heck of a lot of work, but worth it. I hope you have read through the "Ride Reviews" and enjoyed our two automobile-themed issues we published this year.

There is one more task to accomplish. Every year, I have the arduous task of picking the best of the best of the year. Considering the vehicles that have been presented to you in these pages, selecting this year's "best" was a difficult task to accomplish. There had been 20 vehicles reviewed in *Lavender* throughout 2016. All of these vehicles had their own stories to tell: sales redemption, new engineering and design, new performance options, and advanced connectivity and safety technology. Among these were icons of the automotive realm, leaving their legacies behind for their owners and fans.

Of icons and everyday vehicles, which ones are the best amongst these "Ride Reviews"? Let's pick ten, shall we?

AUDI TT

At its finest, Audi can still make memories out of great designs and engineering. The TT is accessible and quite the driving experience. It is a coupe at its purest, though equipped with Audi's latest advances, such as the Virtual Cockpit combining instrumentation and infotainment. With the turbocharged 2.0-liter engine, you can feel it run through its lightweight body. This is an Audi for enthusiasts who want the feel of a pure sports machine.

DODGE CHARGER

How can anyone ignore the sound and fury of 485 horsepower piped loudly through its exhaust? How can you ignore the rumble and the authority of this HEMI-powered, SRT-infused machine? The Charger we tested wore Plum Crazy paint; the car itself is absolutely that. A practical four-door with a hammer under the hood. You can get this with a sledgehammer, the SRT Hellcat with its 6.2-liter supercharged V8 engine and its 707 horsepower rating. We think the "392" is more than enough for this car.

HONDA CIVIC

The newest version of this popular compact car is becoming the best one ever. Its advanced design, combined with a new turbocharged engine, advanced interior design, and engineering, along with active safety features, are all part of an equation that has brought Honda customers back to this car. Civics have been just mere reliable cars for everyday drivers. This one will bring even more people to the charms of its new era.

MINI CLUBMAN

This MINI may be a bit Maxi, but it still embodies all of the good things the brand has to offer. A lower center of gravity has been enhanced with a longer wheelbase for more interior space and access. A new set of engines give owners a choice of the kind of performance and economy they want. It is also one of the most customizable vehicles you can get at a dealership. For being the most practical MINI ever, it is also the most fun you can get in one, next to the Hardtops.

MITSUBISHI LANCER EVOLUTION

We said goodbye to a hero. The Evo starred in a film series that engaged a generation of car enthusiasts to its charms. It is all power, a big turbocharger, and all-wheel drive. This beast



Dodge Charger



Honda Civic



Mini Clubman

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

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Porsche 911

is untamable, which makes it desirable. The world has changed again with new contenders filling in for this master of all sport compacts. Still, people want an Evo. They want the untamed power of a big turbo, all-wheel drive and astounding driving dynamics.

NISSAN MAXIMA

Nissan defined the big sedan decades ago when it was touted as the "Four-door Sports Car." Generations later, Nissan went back to the drawing board and recaptured that feeling in a class that seems to be losing customers. However, it is a charming big sedan, full of performance, comfort, and style. Nissan's response was to add more available active safety to go along with its new design. The result is a new attraction at the Nissan showrooms.

PORSCHE 911

An icon. A legend. A track master. We can go on describing what the 911 has meant for generations of owners and enthusiasts. In all, it is the experience that counts. The car evolved over time, but the formula has not changed: a rear-mounted, horizontally opposed, six-cylinder engine and a shape that has stayed the same. Everything else is just additions to the legend. The result has not changed, either: one of the greatest driving experiences in the world.

TOYOTA PRIUS

As much as our community loved these pioneers of the hybrid car genre, it has never been loved by anyone else. Yet, Toyota went on to create a polarizing design to hide the best-driving hybrid ever. This new Prius is more comfortable to drive, more engaging with its new rear independent double wishbone suspension and more advanced with active safety features and better aerodynamics. This may change the way we see the Prius once and for all.

VOLKSWAGEN BEETLE DUNE

Shaped like the icons that once ruled the planet since the end of World War II, this new Beetle offers sportiness and value for its owners. Yet Volkswagen felt the car needed more pizzazz! It needed a reminder of what the old Beetle had done for the youth of the 1960s and 1970s. The Dune is that reminder of when dune buggies and Baja Bugs were the coolest cars around to have. This cool Beetle was a fun car to drive around in, for sure!

VOLVO XC60

The renaissance of Volvo is underway with new products designed to engage and luxuriate their owners. While the new products shine in their showrooms, the XC60 continues to attract both traditional and new Volvo owners to its charms. The practicality and capability has been enhanced by the addition of the Drive-E engine line to all of its models, including the turbocharged and supercharged version found on our tester. That is why you find a lot of these Volvos in our area. ■


Toyota Prius


Volkswagen Dune


Volvo XC60





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SKIRTING THE ISSUES | BY ELLEN KRUG

This is How I'll Remember 2016

Lost lives.

Lost chances.

Lost hopes.

I could end right here and would have said all that's needed. Still, there is always more to say. That's especially true with the new normal of Trump-Pence, where fear abounds and compassion lacks.

Fifty years from now — assuming we make it that long as a civilization — historians will look back at 2016 and wonder how it could be that a country which had been on track to eventually get things right relative to race, gender, foreign-born status and GLBT people could have gotten itself so completely derailed. No doubt, they'll see this year's presidential election as a watershed moment.

My question to those future historians: what the hell kind of watershed moment was it? How do you go from electing a kind, compassionate (there's that word again), bookish-brilliant black president to electing a race-baiting, misogynistic white narcissist who doesn't read?

Think of how optimistic we were back in January. The Republicans were fighting with each other; Donald Trump still wore the "fool" moniker; and we Dems had an old dude named Bernie who ignited imagination and passion about how things actually could be different for those in the bottom 47 percent. For Hillary supporters, the phrases "emails" and "private server" were still relatively benign.

As we made our way through the year, we began to lose people and things: presidential candidates, Democratic National Committee emails, and a whole lot of bright lines about what was acceptable in politics and civil discourse and what was not. And the losing continued. Big time. In June, we lost 49 wonderful humans in Orlando to a madman who harbored a distorted view of Islam and who suffered from repressed homosexuality. In July, Minnesota lost Philando Castile; a "kind, gentle soul," they called him "Mr. Phil" at the elementary school where he worked.

In the early morning hours of Nov. 9, we lost our chance to go forward as a country. Now, we're trying our best to keep what we — that is, what we GLBT folks, people of color, persons born in some foreign land, and anyone else who isn't straight, white, cisgender, and angry — have gained in the last eight years.

Yet, in our collective heart of hearts, we know the next four years won't really be about preservation or keeping. Instead, it'll be all about measuring how much we'll lose.

For trans persons, the future will include new states enacting "bathroom bills." In 2017 and onward, how many more young trans teens and adults will we lose to suicide because they feel as if they don't matter?

We'll lose other people as well, to a government that will be preoccupied with throwing out those who've come here simply for a better, safer life.

Think about being the 14-year-old kid born here but whose criminal record-free Mexican parents came to the United States illegally 20 years ago. Imagine the fear: that someday he/she will come home at the end of a school day to find the front door wide open, maybe even busted down, with parents nowhere to be seen.

Try to imagine being that kid. How many millions of kids will carry that fear for god knows how long into the future?

2016 was also the year that as a country, we gave in to what we vowed we'd never become: a place where fear and labeling become the defining factors in how we treat each other. Mexican rapist. Radical Islamist. Professional protester. Trump supporter. Hillary voter.

Forget about the Constitution or majority rule. You might as well also throw out any notion that "it could never happen here" too. Because we're at great risk of it happening.

I find myself wondering what the German people thought in 1933 as Hitler came to power. Were they all consciously willing to lose so much in order to feel safe? Or instead, did it sneak up on them, one SS goose step at a time?

Pivoting away from Debby Downer, I regained something key in 2016: two dear friends (who became distant when I transitioned genders) re-entered my life. We reconciled over breakfast at a Boston restaurant in late September and I'll be eternally grateful for their acceptance of me as Ellie. Finally, let me end with grit. I believe in grit. We who reside along the GLBT spectrum have enormous reservoirs of grit, far more than most of us realize. We'll need to tap into that grit in the coming months and years. As long as we do that — and as long as we stand together and have each other's back — I'm confident we'll get through whatever the coming years throw at us. Really. I'm very optimistic in that way. Bring on 2017. ■

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A FEW WORDS | BY PATRICK BOLAND

Christmas Eve

Christmas and the holiday season should be the happiest time of the whole year: the entire family gathered together, group activities, snow, the scent of pine, warm gingerbread.

Christmas always seemed like love incarnate to me, which is why when I perused my old journal this past month, I was startled to see the following entry. I could attempt to explain it, justify it, or write it off. But know only that I wrote this on Christmas Eve my junior year of college, three weeks after admitting to myself I loved other men. At this time, only two other people knew.

It is a collage of my worst memories:

Friday, Dec. 24, 2010

Another wave whispers quietly up the beach and lays soft, cold kisses on my feet. The sky glows like a burning rainbow, streaked with dark blue strips of old wallpaper. A heart lays drawn on the ground as I pass. When I return, it has already been nearly washed away. A young man lunges to catch a frisbee thrown by his father's deft hand. My mother walks next to me. Words are shared, but I am absent. Even with the company, I feel only an aching loneliness.

Walking in a sea of people. Screams from twisted metal, shrieks of joy. The acrid scent of garbage and warm, carb-loaded fat tinges my nostrils. I can feel the warm asphalt through my sandals. My feelings repulse me. I feel the need to void my stomach. My brow remains furrowed, though my smile still shines quick and frequent. My face will not betray me.

Another beach, this time at night. The sand feels chunky and damp and sucks at my feet. When I walk along the area of the receding tide, I feel that soft, sagging feeling of the just-moistened ground. Each footstep makes a soft sigh as it presses into the ground, and an echo as it leaves. The beach lies desolate but for the stars and the heavy boulders that tinge its borders. Why won't someone come? My prayers spread outward and are lost in the ocean's depths.

Sitting against a wall. My brain feels fuzzy and I feel that loose-limbed numbness. I can still taste the whiskey on my breath. "Pat, you look like you're going to cry." A laugh, a joke, another deflection. A movement toward the bathroom. That reflection in the mirror. Despair covers me like a cloud. Washing my face in that cream-colored basin, the burbling of the water buries the sobs. The water stops. I smile at myself, my practiced eyes crinkle at the edges. The master actor walks out while his soul lies in the salty torrent that slowly spills down the drain.

I keep trying so hard. I push my mind harder and harder. *You can do it, if you just try hard enough, you can do it.* I lie beneath my covers in that alien place, beneath that breathless and pine-scented air. I eventually make my way down the bunk, slipping into the bathroom. I stare in the mirror, I sit on the toilet, on the edge of the bathtub. Eventually, my task wearies me. The defeat has taken me to the brink. I crawl into that porcelain womb and sob into my arms.

That strange, frenzied flight. The now-unfamiliar scents of home. The dirt and grime of a few days lying caked on my body. Into the shower, as always, the one solitude in a crowded life. The water pours over me. I remember the sunburn, the snowcones, the scent of chlorine, the feeling of wet swim trunks, the bite of my first liberal curse words still giving me the hungering taste of blood on my tongue, the deft movements of a tennis racket, the dimpled surface of a basketball, a leather armchair, sleeping forms, a simple statement that in its brevity haunts my mind. The memories pour over me with the torrent of water. Why is it all lost? I cannot keep it. I cry as though I have lost God, himself.

Why? Why? The chimes sing, but their song burns my skin. The bitter wind refuses to calm the fire that spins and spirals down my limbs. My heart lies lanced with an agonizing pain. Why? I cannot even cry.

All breaks in a numbness of years. The flatness of most of it haunts worse than the canyons of my pains. The most meaningful moments might seem familiar; I have rewritten them many times in my mind. I often speak of thunder, of echoes, of shrieks and cries, of music in stillness. Yet so much of my life has been a rushed exhalation of air, a grasping of desperate fingers, a soul spreading outward in a spiral of lights…

Yet, the silent tears pool in nothingness. I beat at the waters. There are no ripples. The obsidian surface shows no reflection.

There is only a silence so terrible that there is no scream. ■

You can follow Patrick Boland on Instagram @patrickjboland0 and on Facebook – patrick.boland.146. You can also subscribe to his blog at www.patrickjamesboland.com, which gives weekly 'homework' assignments on finding health, wealth, and happiness. He can be reached by e-mail at patrickjboland0@gmail.com.

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